

Texas - 2nd District

2 Charles Wilson (D)

Of Lufkin — Elected 1972

Born: June 1, 1933, Trinity, Texas.
Education: Attended Sam Houston State U., 1951-52;
U.S. Naval Academy, B.S. 1956.
Military Career: Navy, 1956-60.
Occupation: Lumberyard manager.
Family: Divorced.
Religion: Methodist.
Political Career: Texas House, 1961-67; Texas Senate,
1967-73.
Capitol Office: 2265 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-2401.



In Washington: Wilson's reputation for high living long has obscured his image on the inside as one of the better lobbyists and vote traders in the House.

Some members who initially thought of him only as "good-time Charlie" were surprised one day early in his second term when they listened to him leading the defense of the percentage depletion allowance for independent oil producers. Instead of the Wilson they were used to, strutting and wisecracking his way down the aisle, they watched him in the well of the House presenting charts, graphs, statistics and a flood of effective rhetoric.

Without his amendment preserving depletion for the independents, Wilson said, "the petroleum industry of the United States will be controlled by the eight men who head the eight major oil companies in the United States."

It did not quite work. The House rejected his amendment, 216-197. But depletion was preserved for independents in the eventual bill that emerged from House-Senate conference, and they have it to this day.

That depletion debate in 1975 was a decisive moment in Wilson's career. Since then, he has become known as the most persistent House defender of independent oil interests. As public clamor against the major oil companies has grown in recent years, the independents have surpassed the majors as a lobbying force in Congress and as a source of money for conservative congressional campaigns. To a certain extent, the industry's greater clout has increased Wilson's influence. In 1979 Wilson used some of his vote-trading skill to work a favorable deal for independents on windfall profits tax legislation.

In recent years, Wilson's support for oil has broadened into a defense of Texas and other Sun Belt states against the claims of the

Frost Belt region that it is discriminated against in federal spending formulas. In 1981 he became the head of a new "Sun Belt Caucus" of 90 members, aimed at resisting Frost Belt arguments with counter-statistics. "What's wrong with those states," he said of the Frost Belt in 1982, "is the weather, the business climate and the tax policy. They can't pass bills to make it warmer up there."

In the past few years, however, Wilson's oil and regional lobbying have brought him less attention than his views on foreign aid. Wilson was a militant defender of Anastasio Somoza's regime in Nicaragua. As a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Carter administration, Wilson sometimes made his support for overall foreign aid programs contingent upon inclusion of money for Nicaragua. When the administration proved unfriendly to Somoza, Wilson became increasingly unfriendly to the program. After leftist guerrillas seized power in Nicaragua, Wilson became a militant opponent of U.S. aid and a critic of efforts to supply it.

One of Wilson's favorite recipients of foreign aid is Egypt. In the 97th Congress, Wilson offered an appropriations amendment to add \$100 million in arms loans to the Mubarak government and to earmark an additional \$100 million in military assistance grants to Egypt.

A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Wilson has been a foreign policy hawk his entire congressional career and spent several years on Appropriations working his way up to a place on the Defense Subcommittee. He finally made it there in 1980. During the Carter years, he was a persistent advocate of developing the neutron bomb and the B-1 bomber, both of which President Carter opposed.

He also has been a good friend of Texas defense interests and contractors. In 1981 he

Charles Wilson, D-Texas

Texas 2

Traditionally poor, isolated and dependent on timber, the east Texas piney woods 2nd took on a new prosperity in the 1970s with the growth of the oil industry.

Lufkin, the district's largest city, still relies on a large paper mill for many of its jobs. But it also has two factories that make oil and gas drilling equipment.

Orange, heavily industrialized, hosts petrochemical facilities and a waning ship-building industry. Goodyear, Gulf Oil and Du Pont all maintain plants along Orange's major industrial corridor, known locally as "Chemical Row." Orange also has the 2nd's only significant concentration of union members. But the 1980 recession hurt "Chemical Row" badly, with unemployment in Orange County approaching 18 percent late in 1982.

Independent oil outfits and cattle ranches are scattered throughout the district. The area's high annual rainfall has improved the grazing land, boosting local ranching.

East — Lufkin; Orange

Like all of east Texas, the 2nd is conservative territory with strong ties to Dixie. The 2nd's Deep South character was evident in 1968, when it was the only district in the state to back George C. Wallace in that year's presidential balloting. The rural counties have a residual populist streak, however, and the district as a whole has been hospitable to moderate Democrats, such as Wilson, who have been willing to speak its language.

The 2nd responded favorably to Jimmy Carter in his 1976 presidential campaign, giving him nearly 60 percent of its vote. Even in 1980, when Carter lost the state by a decisive margin, he carried the 2nd by just under 5,000 votes.

Population: 526,772. White 433,363 (82%), Black 81,820 (16%). Spanish origin 16,906 (3%). 18 and over 372,792 (71%), 65 and over 62,165 (12%). Median age: 30.

lobbied strongly for funding for the A7-K attack plane, which has relatively few friends at the Pentagon but is manufactured by the Vought Corp. of Dallas. When the Appropriations Committee tried to block a Pentagon move to transfer Army helicopter maintenance facilities from Texas to Pennsylvania, Wilson led the argument for keeping it where it was.

To make it onto Appropriations at all, Wilson had to use some of his best Texas lobbying skill. He made his move in 1977, after two House terms, challenging another applicant from the state's Democratic delegation, Richard C. White, a seven-term veteran. Texas Democrats had been recommending committee assignments on the basis of seniority for more than 40 years, and they recommended White to the leadership's Steering and Policy Committee. But Wilson campaigned for the vacancy personally among Steering and Policy members, and he won the seat. Some of the delegation was angry, but the controversy eventually subsided.

Once he joined Appropriations, Wilson had to put in two terms on the District of Columbia Subcommittee, a usual starting place for new members. He was chairman of the D.C. subcommittee for a year during the 96th Congress

and made frequent headlines for his verbal assaults on the city's government. "I think this city is a basket case," he said at one point. "In Washington, it takes 143 people to do what it takes 100 people to do any place else, and I aim to do something about it." His views brought him into frequent conflict with District Mayor Marion Barry, as Wilson refused to support as large a federal subsidy for the financially plagued city as Barry wanted.

Wilson has successfully managed to combine his active legislative career with the pursuit of pleasure in Washington at all hours. He has never seemed embarrassed about being labeled a playboy or a smiling Texas rogue; he seems to enjoy it. His staff is mostly female and strikingly good looking, and its members sometimes escort him around the Washington social circuit. For a time he dated a woman whose picture had appeared on the cover of *Playboy* magazine. "I love what I'm doing," he once told a reporter. "Why should I go around looking like a constipated hound dog? I'm having the time of my life."

Over the years, Wilson has felt that his constituency not only accepts his style of life, but secretly admires it. "There's a wild streak in people down here," he has said of his east

Texas - 2nd District

Texas district. "People are inclined to put up with personal behavior. I bet that *Playboy* cover didn't cost me 100 votes."

Wilson's self-confident approach may face a difficult test. Early in 1983, it was reported that a Washington D.C. grand jury was investigating charges that he had used cocaine. "I'm confident that it's going to be resolved in my favor," Wilson said, "after a lot of money and a lot of tears and a lot of sleepless nights." Whatever the legal result, Wilson may be forced on the defensive in Texas in a way he never has been before.

At Home: A voting record that includes support for the Equal Rights Amendment and aid to New York City might seem out of place in a rural east Texas district.

But Wilson's brash, likable personality has always helped him at home, and his loyalty to the independent oil industry has bought him some freedom on other issues. He has been unbeatable since he first won the seat in 1972.

Most of Wilson's political career has been spent somewhere to the left of his constituents. In 1960, when most Texas Democrats were backing Lyndon B. Johnson for the Democratic presidential nomination, Wilson was for John F. Kennedy. In the Texas Legislature, Wilson crusaded against high utility rates, fought for Medicaid and tax exemptions for the elderly and sponsored bills to remove a ceiling on welfare spending. He was commonly identified as "the liberal from Lufkin," advancing his career with the help of Arthur Temple, a maverick lumber millionaire who treated him as a protégé and helped finance his campaigns.

During his successful congressional race in 1972, Wilson softened his liberalism somewhat, opposing school busing and gun control. But he still drew the support of blacks and labor and easily defeated the wife of Rep. John Dowdy in the Democratic primary. Dowdy's husband had been sentenced to prison earlier in the year for bribery, conspiracy and perjury.

Committees

Appropriations (17th of 36 Democrats)
Defense; District of Columbia; Foreign Operations.

Elections**1982 General**

Charles Wilson (D) 91,762 (94%)
Ed Richbourg (LIB) 5,584 (6%)

1982 Primary

Charles Wilson (D) 66,492 (74%)
William Duncan (D) 23,286 (26%)

1980 General

Charles Wilson (D) 142,496 (69%)
F.H. Pannill Sr. (R) 60,742 (30%)

Previous Winning Percentages: 1978 (70%) 1976 (95%)

1974 (100%) 1972 (74%)

District Vote For President

	1980		1976
D	86,056 (50%)	D	85,850 (59%)
R	81,093 (48%)	R	59,163 (41%)

Campaign Finance

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
1982			
Wilson (D)	\$268,944	\$123,744 (46%)	\$221,373
1980			
Wilson (D)	\$226,921	\$96,286 (42%)	\$240,766
Pannill (R)	\$17,463	\$250 (1%)	\$17,460

Voting Studies

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	S	O	S	O	S	O
1982	47	30	51	30	63	15

1981	57	34	54	36	68	24
1980	49	26	52	27	63	17
1979	55	32	57	32	63	28
1978	54	35	59	27	48	37
1977	49	33	65	21	45	41
1976	45	39	56	27	46	34
1975	52	29	55	26	45	38
1974 (Ford)	57	35				
1974	55	26	64	25	43	46
1973	29	58	71	20	38	53

S = Support

O = Opposition

Key Votes

Reagan budget proposal (1981)	Y
Legal services reauthorization (1981)	Y
Disapprove sale of AWACs planes to Saudi Arabia (1981)	N
Index income taxes (1981)	N
Subsidize home mortgage rates (1982)	Y
Amend Constitution to require balanced budget (1982)	Y
Delete MX funding (1982)	N
Retain existing cap on congressional salaries (1982)	?
Adopt nuclear freeze (1983)	N

Interest Group Ratings

Year	ADA	ACA	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1982	25	65	47	56
1981	20	62	50	58
1980	17	43	39	67
1979	21	44	45	82
1978	35	50	68	65
1977	25	26	65	50
1976	20	40	71	54
1975	42	38	70	29
1974	39	40	82	38
1973	48	32	91	40